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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ANKARA 000025

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, EUR/RPM, EUR/ERA

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SUBJECT: TURKEY-ESDP CONFERENCE GENERATES HEAT, NOT LIGHT

REF: 09 ANKARA 147 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol-Mil Counselor Anthony Godfrey, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Turkey pushed for regular consultations with and better treatment by the EU in matters related to European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) during a conference jointly hosted by the EU Institute for Security Studies (EU ISS) and the Turkish MFA in mid-December, but achieved no progress. MFA contacts told us that they had pushed to include representatives from the U.S. and Canada at the event, but relented when the EU ISS threatened to call off the event if the MFA insisted. A follow-on event is scheduled to take place in Paris during the Spanish EU Presidency. Comment: The conference did little to advance EU-Turkey dialogue on security issues. If anything, it only served to reinforce the MFA's belief that the EU underestimates Turkey's value as a contributor to ESDP, and is incapable of overcoming Cypriot objections for closer Turkey-ESDP ties. Turkey continues to assert that the US is a key ally in its effort to press the EU for better treatment of non-EU NATO Allies. In the absence of tangible improvements in EU treatment of non-EU NATO Allies, Turkey will likely view with suspicion U.S. efforts to deepen our bilateral security dialogue with the EU. End Summary and comment.

Airing of Grievances

¶2. (C) MFA Section Head for Euro-Atlantic Security Esra Dogan provided polmiloff with a readout of the December 11 conference entitled "Turkey and the ESDP: Towards an Enhanced Partnership?" The event, which took place in Istanbul, was co-sponsored by the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EU ISS), the Middle East Technical University (METU), the Center for Economic and Foreign Policy Analysis (an Istanbul-based think tank and the Turkish MFA. MFA Deputy Undersecretary Unal Cevikoz was the senior Turkish representative at the conference, and MFA International Security Affairs Director General (and former Turkish Permrep to NATO) Tacan Ildem, his deputy Gulhan Ulutekin, and Dogan each delivered remarks during the conference.

¶3. (C) According to Dogan, who was the MFA coordinator for the event, the MFA was relieved that the event ultimately took place and served as an opportunity for Turkey to reiterate its support for ESDP and highlight Turkey's value as a vital security partner for the EU. Yet, she said the MFA was disappointed that the conference amounted to little more than a venue to revisit old grievances, and that the event fell short of Turkey's hope to make more progress on

its relationship with ESDP under Sweden's EU presidency.

14. (C) Dogan shared with us the speaking notes used by Turkish officials at the meeting, and noted that every Turkish official highlighted the strong overlap between Turkey and the EU's strategic outlook and security strategy, and emphasized how Turkey is a natural asset for the EU's ambition to be a global security actor and has already been a strong contributor in every ESDP operation to which it has been invited to participate. MFA DG Ildem, in his remarks, said "Ankara's stronger ties to her neighborhood and her vast experiences in these regions are an asset for the West and for the EU in particular."

15. (C) MFA Deputy DG Ulutekin went further and said there is "strategic convergence" between Turkey and the EU and highlighted as potential areas for cooperation the Caucasus, the Middle East, the Balkans, energy, defense industry, terrorism, inter-cultural dialogue, and counter-piracy. Given Turkey's status as the largest non-EU contributor to ESDP operations, however, Ulutekin stated that it is reasonable for Turkey to expect the EU to treat non-EU contributors in a fashion similar to NATO's treatment of non-NATO contributors through NATO's Politico-Military Framework (PMF) and asked the EU to offer "PMF-like" arrangements to non-EU contributors. The MFA officials all pushed the EU to establish regular security consultations with Turkey, akin to EU talks with Russia and the U.S., and called the EU's refusal to engage in such a dialogue with Turkey -- an EU candidate country -- a "contradiction."

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Turkish officials also expressed disappointment with the EU not living up to its commitments to non-EU European Allies, as outlined in the "Nice Implementation Document" of 2002.

The Knives Come Out Early

16. (C) The harshest critique of the EU's treatment of Turkey under ESDP came from Dogan during her presentation in the opening panel entitled "ESDP Missions: Lessons Learned and Challenges." Dogan reportedly said "On operational fronts, there have been serious frustrations on the part of Turkey when she was not consulted before the launch of ESDP missions in Georgia, Iraq and in the Middle East, all in her immediate vicinity." Calling the EU's failure to consult Turkey a "bitter lessons learned," Dogan dismissed the EU's explanation that the obligation to consult with non-EU NATO Allies only applied to ESDP military operations, and argued that the EU should be more flexible in responding to Turkey's desire to consult with the EU in a 27 Plus 1 format or EU Troika Plus One format.

17. (C) Dogan also criticized the EU's refusal to engage in an informal exchange of views following the release of Turkey's December 2008 "food for thought" non-paper on improving NATO-EU relations, asking rhetorically whether the EU's inability to engage even informally with Turkey can be of benefit to ESDP in the long run. Finally, she called on the EU to conclude a security agreement with Turkey and allow Turkey to participate in the European Defense Agency, both long-standing requests, in order to strengthen Turkey-ESDP cooperation. She noted that the EU's inability to agree to these steps is an illustration of how Europe's security relationship with important partners could be held hostage by one of more member states. This, she concluded, was a key weakness in Europe's security policy.

EU Response

18. (C) EU ISS director Alvaro de Vasconcelos, according to Dogan, responded by urging Turkey to "forget about the past" and to "not be too focused on perceived wrongs." Dogan said

she also found some of Vasconcelos' other statements during the conference "shocking," including his alleged assertion that "Turkey is a candidate country, not a partner of the EU" and should not expect "special treatment" and that given Turkey's "long history as an empire, even fifty years (to attain EU membership) is not a very long time." In response to Turkey's complaint of the EU's failure to consult Ankara on ESDP missions in Turkey's neighborhood, Vasconcelos said consultations should be a two-way street and chided Turkey for launching the Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform (ref a) following the Georgia crisis without consulting the EU first, even though the EU was already active in the Caucasus. (Comment: We have not been able to confirm the accuracy of these statements attributed to Vasconcelos. End Comment.)

¶9. (C) Swedish Embassy in Ankara poloff Helena Storm said Sweden provided "behind-the-scenes" support for the event, including funding, but decided not to give the conference a higher profile as Stockholm was focused on preventing a "train-wreck" on the EU progress report on Turkey's accession process. Given well-known sensitivities concerning ESDP among certain member states, Storm told us, the Swedish Foreign Ministry wanted to distance itself from the conference, sending only a working level official (deputy director level) to the event. Swedish Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Goran Lennmarker did attend the conference.

Europeans-Only Affair, Contrary to Turkey's Wishes

¶10. (C) Dogan claimed that the MFA had pushed to invite participants from other non-EU NATO Allies, particularly the U.S. and Canada, to provide a "transatlantic perspective" to the discussion. The EU ISS initially suggested RAND's Stephen Larrabee as a possible speaker, but this was rejected by Turkey due to Larrabee's supposed "anti-Turkey" bias. The MFA, according to Dogan, had indirectly floated inviting US NATO PermRep Ambassador Ivo Daalder to the conference, but

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the EU ISS rejected the proposal. Due to the inability to agree on a suitable U.S. speaker, the EU ISS threatened to cancel the event altogether. Turkey ultimately relented, but in his opening remarks at the conference, Turkish MFA Deputy U/S Cevikoz laid down a marker that Turkey expected U.S. and Canadian speakers to participate at the next conference to be hosted by the EU ISS in Paris in the first half of 2010.

Comment

¶11. (C) The exchanges at the conference, as reported by the MFA, struck us as even more acrimonious than the usual bitter refrain we hear from Turkish officials on this issue. MFA officials clearly remain frustrated with the EU's treatment of non-EU NATO Allies in general and of Turkey in particular, and are pessimistic about a breakthrough given, from their perspective, the EU's unwillingness to show flexibility, particularly regarding Turkey's involvement in EDA and concluding a security agreement with Turkey. The MFA's strong desire for U.S. participation in these discussions is a reflection of its belief that the US remains Turkey's indispensable ally in pushing the EU to improve its treatment of non-EU NATO Allies. In the absence of tangible improvements in how the EU deals with non-EU Allies, Turkey will likely view with suspicion efforts to deepen our security dialogue with the EU.

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